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ABSTRACT

This discussion: (1) contrasts children's play with war toys with children's imaginative war play; (2) provides definitions of play and war toys; (3) probes the impact of war toys on children's behavior, ideas, attitudes, and values; (4) reports related research; and (5) describes organizations working against such toys, including the International Falcon Movement (IFM-SEI), the International Association for the Child's Right to Play (IPA), and the World Association of Orphans and Abandoned Children (WAO). Discussion was motivated by concern with the greatly increased use of toys of war and violence during the 1980s in the United States and other countries. It is concluded that militarism and toy trade profits are the two main interests behind the promotion of toys of war and violence. (RH)

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DO CHILDREN NEED TO BE INTRODUCED TO VIOLENCE ?
- THE USE OF TOYS OF WAR AND VIOLENCE.

Paper presented to the conference CHILDHOOD IN THE 21ST CENTURY
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DO CHILDREN NEED TO BE INTRODUCED TO VIOLENCE?
- THE USE OF TOYS OF WAR AND VIOLENCE.

* I am going to speak about the increased use of toys of war and violence. I will start with some definitions of play and war toys, then continue with the impacts of war toys, research, organisations working against those toys - and at last make a conclusion about the forces wanting to introduce violence to children.

1. War toys versus to play war

First an important declaration. I am talking about ready made war toys. I am not talking about the eventual toys children themselves are making when play war. When children have got some kind of experience of war and violence - from TV or elsewhere - it is necessary for them to play through the situations - that makes children playing war. But for this game they do not need any pre-fabricated war toy fot that kind of war game. It might be enough with a finger - or a stick - or a pen "Bang, Bang - you're dead!" The imagination of the child makes what is needed And - in the next minute - the stick - or the finger - or the pen - might be something else - it is easy for the imagination to make that transformation.

But - if you have ready made war toys - you just can play war with them The imagination just don't tranform them to anything else. They are toy to be used for war and violence.

What I am saying here is concentrated to ready made war toys and the introduction to violation they give the child - and the indoctrination to violence. This is what the toy industries and the toy trade are givning the child. I am not against the war game inspired by a situatio experienced by the child - such games are necessary for the healthy development of the child - play is often like that - to repeat experiences - good or bad.

2. What is play?

There are numerous definitions - I like to quote the first part of the IPA Declaration adopted by my organisation IPA "the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE CHILD'S RIGHT TO PLAY:

> "CHILDREN are the foundation of the world's future. Children have played at all times throughout the history and in all cultures.
>
> PLAY along with the basic needs of nutrition, health, shelter and education, is vital to develop the potential of all children.
>
> PLAY is instinctive, voluntary and spontaneous. It is natural and exploratory.
>
> PLAY is communication and expression, combining thought and actio

it gives satisfaction and a feeling of achivement
PLAY touches all aspects of life
PLAY helps children develop physically, mentally, emotionally and socially.
PLAY is a means of learning to live, NOT a mere passing of time."

When children play together they also learn a lot of things. Each perso can do different things. Each person is important and has something to contribute. Each person has rights, not just the strongest or the biggest. To share toys is learning. To solve arguments by taking turns, by asking another person to decide, by changing the rules.

3. Playing with toys of war and violence

When children are playing with war toys it is quite another situation. There is created two sides - "ours" and "theirs". The problems and arguments are solved by fighting. In the game they praise and award the use of violence and physical strength. They start fights and make enemies. They pretend that people don't die or suffer in war. Make war seem like an OK thing to do. Make white people seem better than other people. Make boys seem more important than girls.
To play with war toys is in fact a bad way of playing.

4. What is a war toy?

There are many definitions in use in different parts of the world. I would like to quote the PEACE PLEDGE UNION in London:

"WAR TOYS include all playthings which imitate things that are used to solve conflict, gain power or win through violence and whose aim is to wound or kill. Such toys would include:

1. Replicas of weapons such as rifles, machine guns, pistols, revolvers, hand grenades, bombs etc
2. Replicas of military vehicles, tanks, fighter planes, warships..
3. Dolls such as Action Man, Masters of the Universe etc
4. Model soldiers and items placed in war like context
5. Building or model kits of tanks, military vehicles, cannons, fighter planes, warships etc..
6. Electronic computer games with themes of war and violence
7. Space and fantasy figures, vehicles and games (board or computer games)

5. The impact of toys of war and violence

This time I quote a Canadian document issued during their war toy campaign in 1984:

"* War toys increase aggressive behaviour rather than helping children develop more co-operative, caring and creative ways of being.

* When playing with war toys, children experience a sence of power from being destructive; therefore destructiveness becomes a valued behaviour.

* War toys teach children that:
  - war is a game, a grand adventure
  - killing is acceptable, even fun
  - violence is an acceptable way of solving problems and conflict
  - adversaries, the "bad guys" are not to be reasoned with but eliminated

* Children who play with war toys and video games (and who watch TV regularly) tend to view the world as more threatening than it really is and are more likely to accept violent solutions.

* Through war toys children learn that justice, reason and communication do not determine successes. To become a "winner" one must b- powerful through the use of aggressive means. A gun is a tool of power over others, "the great persuader" that eliminates negotiations and silent dissent.

6. Values taught by toys of war and violence

Of course the war toy teach about war and violence as I h-ve showed, but every time we give a toy, we communicate our adult values to the children who receive these toys. Through play, children imitate our values and the values which the toy stands for.

There are several examples of how the toy industry has tried to create figures for indoctrination and/or discrimination. Sometimes they have also admitted what they are doing. Let me just show two examples:

* NOMAD - "the terrorist doll" was launched by COLECO for the 5 years old and up. The doll was said to be "devious, traitorous and desperate and leads a savage band of cutthroats and calls no country his home". This is not a language for 5-6 year old children? But who wears a burnoose and doesn't have a home? Of course it must be a Palestinian Arab! - Children too young to understand the complexities of the Israelian-Palestinian conflict are being indoctrinated in hatred of Palestinian and Arabs. The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee protested - and the toy industry - COLECO - stopped the NOMAD

* ZARTAN THE ENEMY was another doll. He is "paranoid schizophrenic with multiple personalities" - according to HASBRO's advertising. The Canadian Mental Health Association protested:

"The casual, incorrect use of a medical diagnostic classification, and its use in the personalising of a "doll" is wounding to many who are directly or indirectly affected by schizophrenia. This sales gimmick perpetuates a deplorable stereotype of schizophrenics and the mentally ill as being dangerous and untrustworthy, and contributes to bigotry and ignorance towards the mentally ill."

HASBRO INC agreed to repack it.

7. What about the research?

There are at least three different areas of interest when studying research relevant in the discussion about toys of war and violence. Research about:

* aggression
* mass media violence
* war toys

In the field of aggression research I just would like to point out, that in earlier days the theory of catharsis was common - that childre playing with war things should be released of their aggressions - today that is a passed theory. _lbert Bandura has also pointed to the fact, that if catharsis was relevant, then it should also be good to show pornografic films to release people from sexual anger. Instead in most countries we have got a censorship against such films.

Mass media research shows the following results in brief:

* Learning how to behave violently through IMITATION, stimulation
* HEROISM - idol worship, identification with the perpetrator of the outrage.
* BLUNTING because of the violence - leading to passivity, not upset by the violence anymore.
* BLUNTING leads also to the situation where more violence is accepted as natural.
* DISGUST, not for the villain, but for the victim of the violence
* FEAR - frightned of violence
* Eager for REVENGE

Research about war toys has been carried out usually in day care centres or in the lower grades of elementary schools. Turner and Goldsmith studied in three different studies children of 4 and 5 - and found an increased aggressive behaviour when the children were introduced to war toys. A significant 110 per cent increase in physical

aggression and also increased verbal and physical anti-social behaviour e.g. curses, insults, bossiness, threats to hurt, hits, kicks, bites, pushes, grabs, damage to property.

Radecki compared the effects of HeMan and Transformers war dolls and cartoons versus non-violent Cabbage Patch and Fraggle Rock dolls. He found that when children were playing with Cabbage Patch dolls they showed only one half the level of anti-social behaviour showed by children when playing with the more violent Masters of the Universe dolls.

Brian Sutton-Smith from University of Pennsylvania has made a detailed critical analysis of these and other studies - and found that they have a limited scientific value; the groups studied are too small, the methods used are not the best etcetera. That might be true. On the other hand there is no study showing that the use of war toys should be "good" for children. All show an increased aggressive behaviour. That might be enough for us!

8. War toys and military men..

That there are many more angels from where to discuss war toys is clarely demonstrated by Dr Carol L Andreas in a paper in the Journal of Social Issues from 1969 caleld "War Toys and the Peace Movement". She describes among other things how she got to know that "military men from Washington" attended the toy fairs to offer their consultant services to those who wished to produce or display authentic military toys. The toy trade was eligible for defence department aid. HASBRO INC the greatest toy manufacturer of Action Man, G I Joe etc said that the US Government:

> "....is extremely cooperative at all levels of its military structure, in helping any organisation in any manner it can. We ourselves have been working in close contacts for a number of years with local officials...as well as military officials up through, and including the Pentagon."

We are thankful to Dr Andreas having given us the possibility to look into these aspects of war toys. US is surely not the only country with this cooperation, but the only from which we have got research evidence

9. War toys and the toy trade

All these toys of war and violence are produced by the toy industries in Britain, France, West-Germany, USA, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong etc. We know from the discussions in the European Parliament, that in France there are 17.000 workers in the toy-industries and in West-Germany there are 25.000 workers. It is said that 10 per cent - 1.700 in France and

2.500 in West-Germany are working with war toys- We have not been able to get figures from the other countries. But we know that a lot is produced in this part of the world - Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan.

All the war toys are sold by the toy trade. War toys give the toy retailers a good profit. We can see that when we go through the magazines of the toy retailers. In those magazines are always the possible profit the big thing - not the educational value or the importance of the child´s ne'ds.

10. Which organisations are working against war toys internationally?
There has during the last 20 years been three main organisations being against war toys on an international level.

IFM-SEI - the INTERNATIONAL FALCON MOVEMENT - with member organisations in most parts of the world. IFM-SEI has been specially active in Europe inspiring action in several parliaments and the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. The two European bodies have taken clear stands against war toys - so have countries like Finland, Malta, Norway and Sweden.

IPA - the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE CHILD'S RIGHT TO PLAY - has been active mostly in the "child and play world". The UN Secretary General has appointed IPA as a PEACE MESSENGER because of its activitie against war toys during the International Year of Peace.

WAO - WORLD ASSOCIATION OF ORPHANS AND ABANDONED CHILDREN - found that most orphans were so because of war - then it was important with peace education. As part of the peace education the Symbolic Day of Destruction of War toys was commemorated 1987. Last year there were 136 national committees celebrating this Day - the 7 September. Even this year the 7 September is the Day against war toys and with peace education activities all over the world.

11. Conclusion - poerful interests behind the war toy promotions
As showed --- there are mainly two interests behind the promotion of toys of war and violence - Militarism and Toy Trade Profits. During the 1980's war toys increased with more than 500 per cent in USA - and a similar development in other countries.

We - the one's caring for children have also to work against these interests - in the interest of children in the world - and in the interest of a peaceful world for coming generations. If we don't do it - there will not be any CHILDHOOD IN THE 21st CENTURY.

.....Nic Nilsson...IPA....Stockholm....Sweden.....